

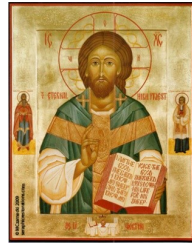


Jesus Christ



The Faithful Witness

*Stories of the Priests
of the
Diocese of Ogdensburg*



*Stories of the Priests
of the
Diocese of Ogdensburg*

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Dedication

*To All the Priests
of the
Diocese of Ogdensburg
Living and Deceased*





Foreward

Pope Benedict XVI opened the Year for Priests with Solemn Vespers on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 19, 2009. The theme of the Year was to be “Faithfulness of Christ, Faithfulness of Priests” focusing on the sanctification and holiness of priests. The Holy Father’s reason for this declaration was an effort to encourage “spiritual perfection” in priests. Pope Benedict will close the celebrations during a World Meeting of Priests in St. Peter’s Square on June 19, 2010.

The Year for Priests celebrated the 150th anniversary of the death of the Cure of Ars, St. John Mary Vianney, the patron of parish priests. He has been declared the patron saint of all the world’s priests. In the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is the compassionate high priest who is able to sympathize with all of our weakness, one who has been tested in every way, and yet without sin (4:15). Every priest is another Christ who brings to us the face of Christ through his pastoral ministry. What a gift and grace for the life of the Church. Every priest holds the life of the Church in his hands.

The stories that are shared in this booklet are stories of joy and love from people of the Diocese of Ogdensburg about our priests both living and deceased. They are reflections of the priest’s life of fulfillment that comes from a deep relationship with Jesus Christ, the perfect Priest. Their fulfillment, dedication, and commitment come from the sacrament of Holy Orders. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are the “*persona Christi*”—“*the person of Christ*” whom they represent in word and in action.

The priest not only acts in the person of Jesus Christ, but he also acts in the name of the community he serves and ministers. He is a representation, an effective symbol of Christ. He represents Christ to the community by what he does and through his presence. He is the face of Christ to those he teaches, preaches, and with whom he celebrates the sacraments, that is, by baptizing, feeding, healing, and forgiving the people of God.

But the priest also ‘*presents*’ the community to Christ. He acts in the name of the community, in the name of the whole Church, especially when he presents to God the prayer of the Church. He is a representation of his people: knowing their wants and needs, understanding their sufferings, helping with their desires to know Christ more. He is a “pontifex” a “bridge builder” between God and humankind. He brings Christ to his people and the people to Christ.

These stories from the people of the North Country describe how all were touched by the love and life of service the priests had for their God. Their stories tell how God’s plan and great love for each one of us is accomplished through the sacraments of the Church, ministered to us by the priests. We have been so blessed with faith-filled and Christ-centered priests.

May these stories continue to spark a flame within the hearts of men to think about the vocation to priesthood, especially in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. Many other things our priests have done for us which are not written here, but these are written that you might rejoice and celebrate.

Rev. Douglas J. Lucia
Vocation Director, Diocese of Ogdensburg



Introduction

“As Church and as priests, we proclaim Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ, Crucified and Risen, Sovereign of time and of history, in the glad certainty that this truth coincides with the deepest expectations of the human heart. The centrality of Christ brings with it the correct appreciation of the ministerial priesthood, without which there would be neither the Eucharist, nor even the mission nor the Church herself” (Pope Benedict XVI).

Pope Benedict XVI began the Year for Priests with Solemn Vespers on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 19, 2009. The theme of the Year: “Faithfulness of Christ, Faithfulness of Priests” focused on the sanctification and holiness of priests. The Holy Father’s reason for this declaration was an effort to encourage “spiritual perfection” in priests. He closed the celebrations during a World Meeting of Priests in St. Peter’s Square on June 19, 2010.

The Year for Priests celebrated the 150th anniversary of the death of the Cure of Ars, St. John Mary Vianney, patron of parish priests. It was this saintly priest’s faithfulness to prayer and his understanding of Jesus Christ’s mercy and compassion that led him to spend many hours of the day in the confessional as an instrument of God’s reconciling love to so many people.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we read that Jesus is the compassionate high priest who is able to sympathize with all of our weakness, one who has been tested in every way, and yet without sin (4:15). Every priest is another Christ who brings the face of Christ to his people through his pastoral ministry. It is an honor to be called by God to be His humble servant of the Church. Priesthood is a gift and grace for the life of the Church. Every priest holds the life of the Church in his hands.

What a grace and a privilege it has been to be a priest and now bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg. My vocation to priesthood comes from the roots of my parents and their faith and faithfulness to God, to the Church and to family. The people of the North Country have inspired and strengthened me as a priest throughout the Diocese.

It is the stories told of the priests in these pages that speak of their threefold role as priest, prophet and king. They have administered and celebrated the sacraments; spoken and taught the truth of the Gospels; and have led and guided their people to holiness. These stories have inspired the people who wrote them and many more who will read them. It is appropriate that these stories in this Year for Priests be shared in the Diocese and beyond. Jesus Christ, the Faithful Priest, is working in His Church. He is working through the faithful and humble priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg. As we thank God for their lives of faithful service, we continue to pray that more men will respond generously to the Lord’s call to follow Him.

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg



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**A Tribute to the Priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg
Living and Deceased
by
Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ**

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5: 6).

The Year for Priests has come to a close. It has been an honor and a privilege for me to have been a part of the Church’s celebration for the Year for Priests for the past year. I am deeply edified by the priests’ daily prayer, their celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and by their presence in their daily ministering to their people.

Stories have been shared by the priests of the Diocese in the *North Country Catholic* column “*Getting to know the man behind the collar*”. These priests’ reflection of their priestly vocation, especially ‘A Holy Moment in Priesthood’, is truly a sign of their love for their own priesthood.

The people of the Diocese have shared their own loving memories of priests who have touched their lives. They are stories of heartfelt remembrance and gratitude for their compassion and understanding. There are many other untold stories of the dedicated and loving commitment of service of the priests still ministering in and out of the Diocese with a labor of love. How edifying to witness the many priests of the Diocese who have retired and are still ministering by going wherever they are needed to continue what Jesus did for the people—to teach, to heal, to celebrate the sacraments. These stories are also untold but are held in memory and in gratitude for their priestly care and duties. As St. John said in the closing of his Gospel, “but if these (stories) were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

And for those priests who have ministered, served and labored in the Diocese and have been born into eternal life, the people of the Diocese of Ogdensburg are eternally grateful for their answer to their call of priesthood. They pray for us to be Church, to be the People of God. We must pray to them for more priestly vocations for the Diocese. They are our intercessors as we go forward to continue to build the Body of Christ for the sake of the Kingdom of God.



Rev. Andrew Amyot

by

Kathleen Wolfe

This is the story of how Rev. Andrew Amyot, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Norfolk, New York changed my life.

I am a cradle Catholic. I have attended church on Sundays (or Saturday's) when I could, or received Communion at work.

During 2004, my life was taking a downward spiral, my weight was ballooning, I was unable to exercise, due to significant medical problems which were accumulating. Just walking into the church I was out of breath and I was thinking that this would be the last time, that I would not be able to walk into church again, because it was just so hard for me to breathe.

On the third Sunday of Advent, I watched Father walk out of the vestibule, look around, watched him approach and stop next to me in my pew. Father asked me if I would like to carry one of the candles for the Advent wreath. I could tell Father was a little hesitant that I would say no. I agreed and went to the vestibule where he gave me instructions on what I needed to do. The following year, I again accepted to carry a candle during Advent. During this time I had an improvement in my health and the church was looking to have a choir for Christmas. I joined and again felt I was being called. The following year, I was able to do both again.

During this time, I talked with Father about a young lady who had had an abortion. One Sunday as I was leaving church, Father said he thought I would be interested in the Gabriel Project. I talked with Father about it at a later date and he gave me a phone number to call. Yes, I joined the Gabriel Project.

During Spring 2007, the Lay Ministry program was looking for participants. I talked with Father and he said he would sponsor my application. I was not sure what ministry to go in and wanted to be able to bring what was needed to our parish, and I asked Father what he thought I could do and what our parish needed most. He thought about this and answered he thought I would fit into the RCIA program and it was needed by our parish.

In August of 2007, Father was looking for a 10th grade confirmation instructor. The position had been advertized in the church bulletin for many weeks. During one of my visits with Father, he asked if I would be interested in this position. I wasn't sure, but Father thought I would be able to do it and asked if I would try and if it did not work out it would be okay. I am currently in my third year teaching the 10th grade confirmation class.



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Rev. Andrew Amyot

by

Kathleen Wolfe

In September 2009, I was commissioned a Lay Minister. I have learned so much about the Church and about our parish. Acceptance seems to be the most positive attitude.

I look forward to Advent and try to volunteer to carry the Advent candle during the third week, but if someday, Father asks someone else, I will think they are being invited. My only wish is that they also will share a deeper relationship with God.

I'm not sure why Father chose me that day so long ago to carry an Advent candle, but I am glad he did. I think this was a message from God. God knew what I needed and provided for me at such a low point in my life. This one simple invite from Father has changed my life, even my outlook. I enjoy giving service to the church and I am proud of the accomplishments of my students. It may seem like this story is more about me than Father Amyot, but only I know what a difference Father has made in my life. There are no words to express my thanks to him.

It does not take a deep understanding relationship with another to make a difference in a person's life. Sometimes it is the simple invites that mean the most and have the most impact.

I have told my story many times and it still sends chills up my spine. I hope to have a very long and loving relationship with God and his church. I will always remember Father Amyot whose invite started my deeper relationship with God and service to the Church.





A Tribute to Msgr. Louis D. Berube

by
Donna and Michael Marek

We were blessed to have been instruments placed in the daily life of Msgr. Louis D. Berube during his last ten years on earth (1989-99). His passion and zeal in living the vows of the consecrated life were incomparable and uncompromising - his discipline unparalleled.

The Old Testament refers to the "priest" some 700 times and the New Testament about 80 times. Msgr. Berube had a great love for Scripture. He studied it; he lived it. With age and wisdom, Msgr. conquered many of the foibles and indecisions the rest of us typically associate as being awkward or embarrassing moments.

For example, one night in late July 1998, Msgr. called and wondered if someone could join him in praying the rosary. As he and Michael began the rosary on the back porch, other neighbors were outside enjoying the summer evening as well. In Msgr.'s usual strident voice, he led the rosary while Michael responded in whispering fashion - which prompted Msgr. to smile and say, "Don't worry, they've heard this before."

The heart of a priest's character is holiness (Exodus 39:30 and Ezekiel 44:11). Msgr. was set apart to exhort people to fear the Lord, the first principle of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). His words were indeed like ox goads (Ecclesiastics 12:11) effective in moving people to action, as he did in the pro-life movement. We bore witness to his love for the poor, compassion for the down-trodden and his unabashed defense of the unborn child.

With permission, his humble home housed the Blessed Sacrament where he lived and so he was never alone. He prayed, counseled, meditate, read, wrote and administered the Sacraments - living without the distractions of radio or television.

And if you happened to forget the decorum due the Blessed Sacrament, it rarely occurred again. As Donna was helping and working with him one afternoon, she half-genuflected while passing the tabernacle, prompting another classic Msgr. response, "A little bit sloppy on that one, aren't we?" and smiled. Msgr. Berube - always the teacher.

His armor was the rosary; his mission, to serve God's people. Msgr. Berube's courage, example, humility and inspiration reflected his infinite fidelity to, and love for, the priesthood of Jesus Christ. May he rest in peace.





Rev. Gerald Cerank

by
Joyce Theroux

While watching the ordination of our new Bishop, I saw a priest who was very kind and generous to my mother. In the 80's my mother was in the hospital and someone accidentally gave her the Eucharist, thinking that she was a Roman Catholic. When she came home, she said that she wanted me to bring her Holy Communion and, of course, I explained that she must be Roman Catholic to receive. She said the Communion made her feel so much better and she would do anything to receive regularly.

I called our pastor in Keeseville, Fr. Gerald Cerank, and he came to visit her at our home. She was unable to get out because of her disabilities. Fr. Cerank was so extremely kind and generous to my mother and came regularly to teach her about the faith. He then gave her all the sacraments at home. She remained faithful to the sacraments, even in Meadowbrook Nursing Home, when she actually had to disconnect her oxygen to go to Mass.

The most surprising thing was that when she died, her funeral was in Brandon, VT. When I arrived at the Church, there was Fr. Gerald Cerank! We were shocked. We wouldn't have thought of asking a busy priest to come and concelebrate Mass that far away, but there he was! Also, he came to my Aunt's home for the reception.

Thank you, Fr. Gerald, for being so kind and generous to my mother, Minnie Henning. You were a special angel to us.



Rev. Daniel Chapin

by
Isabel D. Bush

In our parish, St Stephen's of Croghan, NY, we have been gifted with a wonderful, Spirit filled priest, Fr. Dan Chapin.

Fr. Dan is very kind, loving and wise. He certainly possesses, not only the gifts of the Lord's Spirit, but also the fruits. Under Father's gentile leadership, our Parish has now become a family who works together.

We are blessed to have a pastor like Fr. Dan. He makes the world a better place to live in!





Rev. James Delbel

by
Rita LaRocque

It isn't a simple matter in this Year of the Priest to find one priest that one can write about who has served in our parish and has had an impact in my life because each one is unique and has a different gift. Having said that, I can say, however, that one that stands out in my mind is Rev. James Delbel.

When Father Delbel gave a homily, the one statement he repeated in each one, was how much "Jesus Loves Us". That thought has remained with me even now, though it has been several years since he was an Associate Pastor at St. John's Parish, Plattsburgh.

I also found that as a Bible teacher he was very enlightening. I thank God for having given us this Man of God for a time.



Rev. Michael Gaffney

by
Maureen Budge

In October 2008, I returned to live in my family home. The home is in the same block as St. Mary's Church Massena, NY. I was baptized in the former St. Mary's Church-now the Social Hall.

On the first weekend of my arrival, I attended Saturday's anticipated Mass celebrated by our pastor Rev. J. Michael Gaffney. He began his homily on St. Paul by directing his attention to the banner to his left and the symbols. Father explained their significance in St. Paul's ministry of the Gospel and his life as an apostle. During the Year of St. Paul, Father's succeeding homilies always touched on this theme.





A Priest's Story-Rev. Arthur J. LaBaff

by
Thomas Scheenberger

An inspired thought that I still model in youth ministry is from Father Art LaBaff. He was youth director in the early 70's when I was working at Guggenheim 74, 75,76...his model of ministry with youth was to "Give them a positive experience of church."

I have never forgotten that simple philosophy and it still holds true today 30+ years later!



Rev. Kris Lauzon

by
Theresa Joseph

I am a parishioner at Holy Name Parish in Tupper Lake and I would like to tell you about Father Kris Lauzon. Through his talks at the pulpit he gave me strength to live each day and inspired me with his words about the Holy Spirit. He lives the kind of life that he inspires all of us to live. When I had days that were trying, his words were caring and understanding.

He has made an everlasting difference in my life. He has touched my life forever and we were blessed to have him as our pastor at Holy Name Parish.





Most Rev. Terry R. LaValley

by
Kathleen Favreau

In June 1988, Sacred Heart Church, Massena, was blessed to have Deacon Terry LaValley assigned to our parish. After his Ordination to the Priesthood in September, we watched him grow as a young priest for four years. He always had a smile - but he was firm if he needed to be! In 1992, for the glory of God's Kingdom, with reservations, we had to let him move on to another assignment. I, secretly, hoped that someday I would have the honor to work with him returning as our Pastor! Little did anyone know that God was molding him to be a bishop.

He had a great teacher at his first assignment - Msgr. John Pendergast - whom he stood by until the end. In May of 1998 the priests were at Emmaus in Lake Placid. I called there and told Father Terry I needed him to come. Msgr. was failing fast. God only knows what his visit did for Msgr. Pendergast, his mentor and friend.

As I was a widowed mother of three, many times Father Terry would listen and give me advice. Then many years later when I lost my daughter and grandson, he called and shared my tears. He cared!

In February when the news was released that he would be our Bishop, the news was bittersweet at first for me. I was so happy for him, but I thought, he will never come back to Sacred Heart to be our pastor. But in God's plan he will not only be the pastor of a few churches in his lifetime, but God chose to share him with the whole diocese as our Bishop!

Bishop Terry LaValley is truly God's extension of His Kingdom - His Good Shepherd on Earth!

Bishop LaValley, may God protect you and bless you with His Love, His Peace, and His Fatherly direction as you lead your family - The Diocese of Ogdensburg!!





Rev. Msgr. Robert Lawler

by
Patricia Ball

"Msgr. Robert Lawler, of St. Mary's in Waddington, has touched our families' lives in a profound way. For many years, my husband wanted to become a Catholic. He would attend Mass every Sunday but could not receive Communion. Msgr. Lawler made all the arrangements and held a private family service in the spring of 2006. My husband was so proud to stand on the altar that evening and insisted on sharing his gratitude by treating the family to ice cream. During the following three years, Msgr. Lawler made several visits and inquiries while my husband battled cancer. On July 13, 2009, my husband passed on and Msgr. Lawler provided the funeral services and spiritual guidance we needed. After the Mass, we went to the ice cream shop just like my husband wanted us to. We were so pleased Msgr. Lawler joined us. He has been with us through sad times as well as the happy times. He helped several of my grandchildren make their Confirmations, First Communion, and Baptisms. Msgr. Lawler is a very special priest and who has inspired our family in so many ways. Thank you, Msgr. Lawler!" (The Don Ball Family)



Rev. Daniel Lord, SJ

by
Sister Jean Marie Chiovitti, SSJ

When I was a teenager, we always got **Our Sunday Visitor** paper after Mass. In it, was an article written by Father Daniel Lord, S.J. for youth. Well, I made a scrapbook of his articles as they were so good. One Sunday under the article was an ad about the Sisters of St. Joseph and their works in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, N.Y. When I saw that they had an orphanage, it made an impression on me, but it took a year of the Sisters in Watertown's prayers before I decided to join the S.S.J. Sisters in Watertown as I was living in Toronto, Canada. Later, I found out that Mother Rose, the Major Superior, had been praying for a Sister from Canada as she was also a Canadian!





Rt. Rev. Msgr. James T. Lyng
by
The Lyng Family



The Lyng family was certainly blessed with the presence of “Father Jim”, “Uncle Jim” or “Jim” as he was called. He was the son of John F. and Susanna McGowan Lyng, born on October 8, 1901 in Watertown, NY. Father Jim was one of seven sons and three sisters. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Ogdensburg on May 5, 1932. He was Chancellor of the Diocese of Ogdensburg from 1941-1952. He served as assistant and pastor in many of the parishes in the Diocese.

He loved his family and was always interactive with them. When his youngest brother was born, there was an issue of what he was going to be named. Father Jim was up to the task and knew what he wanted to name him. His mother told that if he named him, he would be responsible to raise him. Father Jim named him **Edward** and clearly stood by his side until he was able to sustain himself. That in and of itself stands by the principles that Father Jim was all about. On many family gatherings, Father Jim would be at the marriages of his brothers and wives to be, baptism of his nieces and nephews, family reunions, and Christmas celebrations at “Ed and Mary and the kids”. Father Jim would celebrate Christmas dinner at Ed and Mary’s and bring with him an added Christmas gift for each of the children. He made many visits to see his brothers and families of Frank, Watertown; Paul, Buffalo; his sister Sally (Sister Mary Eucharista), Williamsville, N.Y.; Andy, Rochester and Leo, Jackson, Michigan.

One particular memory was a trip that had a stop in Buffalo to visit Aunt Sally (Sister Mary Eucharista). The travelers had no more entered the convent when Aunt Sally asked, “Where is (cousin) Donna? Cousin Donna lived in Rochester, but when that big-four door Chrysler sedan left Watertown and headed West along the thruway, Uncle Jim forgot to stop in Rochester. So... the visit with Aunt Sally was cut short, then back to Rochester to get Donna, then on to Michigan. The gas pedal pumped all the way into Michigan, some of us getting nauseated with his driving.

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Rt. Rev. Msgr. James T. Lyng
by
The Lyng Family

What a wonderful memory of care, compassion, and fun we had with Father Jim. The visits in Michigan would only last a couple of days, but the reunions of the cousins were memorable. As time has passed since these visits (late 1950's and early 1960's) some of us have kept in touch, although somewhat infrequently. When we do see each other there is always talk about the trips with the Monsignor to Michigan.

Father Jim was always faithful to his priesthood and to the people of the parishes he served. Father Jim epitomized the image of Jesus in that he loved little children. Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me". Father Jim had great devotion to the Infant of Prague and spread the devotion to his family. He believed in the message: "You will never know the need for want". He lived that message for others through his charity. He had great love for children. He not only gave generously to his nieces and nephews but to all children and would have candy available to give to them. It became a joke in the family that Father Jim did not have to pay the dentist bill for the number of found cavities. He loved to visit the children at St. Agnes School in Lake Placid. He was a strong supporter of Catholic education at St. Agnes School, Lake Placid and St. Pius X High School, Saranac Lake.

Father Jim was noted for his quiet charity, only learned after his death. His car was always available for the Sisters of St. Joseph to travel to Watertown. Many a night, he would bring ice cream to the Sisters for a treat. Money given to him was always donated back into the parish where he was stationed. When Father Jim was pastor in Lowville, he bought Thanksgiving turkeys for everyone in his parish and undoubtedly for others in need that we will never know about. Personal visits were made to the sick in his parish and especially within his family at those times when he was most needed. How blessed the Lyng family was to have Fr. Jim as part of the family and a brother to his priests. He looks down from heaven praying for all his family and parishioners that he served.

Submitted by: Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ, Edward M. Lyng Jr.,
Mary Elizabeth Lyng Marino, Patrick J. Lyng,
Terence J. Lyng, John Lyng, Robert Lyng, Donna Knope.





Rev. Patrick Mundy
by
Joyce Theroux

The priest who has had the most influence on my life is Fr. Patrick Mundy. In 1975 our family moved to Plattsburgh from Florida. I was going through a spiritual awakening and was confused about how to follow the desires that were becoming so strong in me. He has guided me for over thirty years and the most important teaching he gave me was from Corinthians. He said to read the passage: “Love is always patient and kind; love is never boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Loves does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end.” (1 Cor. 13:4-8) He said to substitute my name for “love”. In other words, Joyce is always patient and kind... etc.

It is not easy to live this way because it is counter-cultural and others get angry and want to argue or fight. To be a person of peace and joy is not easy, but it has been a wonderful life for me and I have Fr. Patrick Mundy to thank for his patience and guidance. My life has often been hectic with ups and downs but he has always made some time to listen and encourage me. It has been the way for me to have hope for the future.





Msgr. Thomas Robillard

by

Sister Kathleen DeBoalt, SSJ



Msgr. Thomas Robillard (Fr. Tom) was a wonderful priest and a friend to many people in the Diocese of Ogdensburg. I first knew him when he came to be pastor of St. Francis Solanus Church in Harrisville where I was teaching at the time. He was one of the first I spoke to when I was trying to decide whether or not to enter the convent. He was always available when I needed to talk and gave excellent advice.

Many may not know that Fr. Tom was a golfer. He and my Dad would go golfing just about every Tuesday when my parents were at our summer home on Lake Bonaparte. Then Father would come to the camp for supper (prepared by my Mom while the golfers were off having a good time). Sometimes Father would call and ask if he could bring someone else along and would tell my Mom to “just add more water to the soup.”

In August 1988 my Dad had surgery at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Syracuse. Fr. Tom made the trip to Syracuse just to see my Dad. He stood at my Dad’s bedside and took his hand to say hello. At that moment my Dad breathed his last and went to heaven. We were always so grateful that he died while holding the hand of such a holy priest.

While Fr. Tom was living in Norfolk my Mom and I would go to see him. He always insisted on taking us to the Lobster House in Norwood for a meal because he knew how much we enjoyed it. I think he was also trying to pay back my Mom for all those golfing night suppers at Lake Bonaparte.

My Mom just passed away recently. The first thing I thought of was that my Dad and Fr. Tom probably met her at the gates of heaven. But then maybe not! They might have been off enjoying a round of golf that day.





A Privilege to Work with the Priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg

by

Vicky Woodard

Diocese of Ogdensburg Receptionist

I have a unique opportunity everyday to work at the Diocese of Ogdensburg. In my position, as Diocesan Receptionist, not only do I get to work with the Bishop of the Diocese, priests in administration, I also get to communicate with almost every priest in the Diocese at some point during the year.

Words can't express the heartfelt gratitude that I have for each one of my fellow co-workers who give of themselves unselfishly each day. Not only are the priests in administration keeping the Diocese running smoothly, they also have parishes, schools and parishioners that need their attention also.

Over the last eight years, I have been witness to the strong commitment of faith, fellowship and loyalty that the priests from the Diocese of Ogdensburg expend in fulfilling their vocation.

I would pray that not only during the Year of the Priest, but at all times, the members of the Catholic Community can recognize and give thanks and praise for the many priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg who live and share their faith so freely.



The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

by

Bev Henningan

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church in Watertown have had an immense impact on my family for many years through their ministry of baptism, marriage, and death but mostly love and friendship. Fathers Dostie, Aubin, Kennedy, Freeh, Huber, McDonald and Brothers Peter and John have always been there when needed by anyone in the parish. Having the charism of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart is a special gift and an important part of the way they carry out their ministry to their people. "Being able to laugh at yourself" is something I try to remember, not easy to do sometimes, which is just one part of their charism. I am very proud to be a Lay Missionary of the Sacred Heart and part of the MSC Family.





A Return “Home”

by
William O’Brien

I grew up Catholic in the City of Syracuse and even graduated from a Catholic High School; Most Holy Rosary School. In my search for God I left the Catholic Church for more than 25 years. Then, at a very troubled time in my life, I began praying and reading and searching to fill-in “what was missing” in my life. It was then I made an appointment to meet with Father Terry LaValley. I was quite anxious to meet with him as I had spent the past 25 years leading other into the Protestant Evangelical church. To my surprise and relief, I was welcomed with love and open arms. Father Terry and Father Joe Giroux were instrumental in my returning to the Catholic Church. I thank God for their prayers, their counsel, their example, and their love of Christ for which they consistently demonstrate. It is because of them, that I can now say: “It’s nice to be home again!”



Gratitude For Our Priests

by
Darlene Cummings

I was born and raised as a non-Catholic. But God in His infinite goodness and mercy, led me to the Catholic faith. In my faith journey of ten years, He has given me the privilege of becoming involved in Formation for Ministry classes this year. God has also given me His grace, to become a catechist at my local parish.

During the steps of my faith journey, God has provided me with His wonderful priests for guidance to help me get to the next “level” of my faith. I thank God for their guidance along the way. I feel I have been blessed to know and love some of the priests in our diocese, and now have such outstanding teachers for Formation classes. My prayer is that other people in our diocese will have the blessings and fellowship with our priests as I have had. May God richly bless us with more wonderful priests.





CHILDREN'S STORIES ABOUT PRIESTS

from

Sister Kathleen DeBoadt's 2nd Grade
IHC Primary, Watertown, NY

I know Fr. Steve Murray. He is a priest. He is a good friend to my family. He is the priest of Holy Family Church. He had to go to college for a long time. Fr. Steve comes to school on Halloween and gives us candy. He baptized all of my sisters.

Jacob Bombard

Fr. Murray is very good. He is a friend with my mom and dad. He helps me learn about Jesus, God, Mary and more about everything. He baptizes little babies. He is very nice. I like him and I like church. He can make people get matrimony. He loves Jesus, God, and Mary just like I do. I love spending time at church with him.

Seraphina Philbrick

I know a priest. His name is Fr. Steve Murray. Fr. Steve does Mass in Watertown. I go there on Sundays. Fr. Steve is a good priest. Fr. Steve had to get Holy Orders. Then he is a priest. Priests can not get married. He can change wine and bread into Jesus' blood and body. He can also baptize people.

Payton Day

I know a priest. His name is Fr. Robinson. He is a good friend of my family. I like him because he is a good priest to have. He stops by our classroom a lot. He has a full head of gray hair and green eyes and a soft voice. He does not have glasses. He is a good man. He is my favorite priest.

Andrew Stewart

I know a priest. His name is Fr. Robinson. I like him because he is nice. My parents know him. He comes to our classroom to talk with us. He baptized me. He can make the body and blood of Jesus. He does not have glasses.

Ethan Wise

I know Fr. Robinson. Fr. Robinson owns two churches now. He is a good priest. His churches are named St. Patrick's and St. Anthony's. He is the best priest I have ever seen. Priests are very, very important to Catholics. He is important because he is a Catholic priest. Owning two churches is a very busy job. He is a busy man.

Cole Grant

I know Fr. Aubin. He is the priest at my church. He can turn the bread and wine into Jesus' body and blood. He has glasses. He is a good man. He is the best priest ever.

Jaden Guga





Come Follow Me

“Come Follow Me”, he said loud and clear
He spoke in your heart - not your ear.
Just as he called the apostles of old
“Come Follow Me” your heart was told.

“Come Follow Me” You continually heard
As You listened in Mass to God’s Holy Word.

“Come Follow Me”, God persisted
“Come Follow Me” - but you resisted.
The call was real. He made you hear.
You knew that now your choice was clear.

You heard your call and asked “Why Me?”
What about my dreams and my family?
You knew what your answer would eventually be.
And God persisted, “Come Follow Me.”

“Come Follow Me” - the Baptismal call
You were now ready to follow His call.
“Come Follow Me”. Such a short simple phrase
One you would obey the rest of your days.

To serve Him, follow Him, and do His will
To shepherd His sheep and help those who are ill.
You will follow the call, your life you give too
You gave Him your dreams, and your future, too.

I Love You, Lord, You say in prayer
I will be yours, your Word I will share.

Your desire is to follow our Lord
To obey His call and to teach His Word.
To do His work here on earth
The call was there from your birth.

He called to a boy, a teen and then a man
You replied, “I will follow you, and do all I can.
I give you my life, my whole body, too
To love as you loved, to do as you do.”

The road may be lonely and filled with tears
But He will be with you throughout your years.
Always with you, never to stray
Always your comfort at the end of your day.

Your days are long, many nights without sleep
Being with families at death, you will weep.
The happy times of marriages and births
These give you hope for our Church here on earth.

You remember the call, speaking to your heart
Your desire to serve God was there from the start.
To serve Him, to love Him, to do His will.
Your church is your family, all your dreams He fulfills.

You will serve your Lord, knowing you’re never
alone.

You will serve your Lord till he takes you home.
You will serve your Lord until your Lord you see
And He calls again, “Come Follow Me.”

Composed by Bessie R. Flanders
For Priesthood Sunday, October 31, 2004





PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

Bessie Flanders
October 30, 2004

I want to thank everyone for coming. I am honored that I was asked to speak on behalf of all the parishioners to thank our wonderful Bishop and priests for all they do for us.

As you know, I work in the Chancery office and I see the many behind the scenes works that our priests do. I work my daily job and pretty much know what my day will be like. Not so with our priests. Not only do most of them have more than one parish but they also work at the chancery, or cover for a vacationing or sick priest. I don't know how they keep it all straight. A perfectly planned day takes a back seat when a call comes that someone has died or gone to the hospital. Off they run - their only concern is ministering to the person and family that they will be seeing.

I have worked ten years for diocese, five years at Wadhams Hall Seminary and five years at the Chancery Offices. In all those years I can honestly say that I personally have never heard one complaint from the many priests I worked with. Their dedication and love for their work, their unquestioning faith, all of these I observed from my first dealings with the Catholic Church at Wadhams. I saw their love in everything they did. I saw them praying privately in the chapel. I saw the tears in their eyes as they heard of a family's trouble or situation. These priests take their call seriously. They show God's love - it just shines out from them.

I also saw them in happier times e.g. at their retreats at Wadhams Hall or daily playing sports with the seminarians at 3pm every day. It's a little disconcerting when you see your boss running down the hall to the gym in little gym shorts. The seminarians loved that time with them and you could hear the shouts and laughter coming from the gym.

I loved seeing them laugh and share stories with other priests at luncheons or dinners. I have had the pleasure of sitting across from many priests at luncheons. They had us all in stitches as they told story after story of funny experiences.



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PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by
Bessie Flanders
October 30, 2004

Wadhams Hall was my first encounter with anything having to do with the Catholic Church. I was raised Episcopalian, was in the Assembly of God for many years and then was a Wesleyan until my husband was transferred to Ogdensburg in 1993. At Wadhams, the priests and nuns took the time to explain the many Catholic traditions and beliefs to me. They never made me feel out of place or uncomfortable as I learned more and more about the Catholic faith.

I gave them many laughs when I first started at Wadhams. Father Robinson once asked me to order more hosts, I looked around and said “can’t you use the seminarians as hosts?” The looks I got told me that that wasn’t the host they meant. Later that year at graduation, Father Siepka asked if I wanted to bring up the gifts. “Gifts I said? How wonderful that you bought them all presents. What did you get them???” I wasn’t really surprised the next day when I found a large book on my desk called the Catechism and a note saying start with Page #1!”

My job at the diocese is very precious to me. I see these men not just as priests, teachers, pastors but as godly men and friends. They never tried to “make me a Catholic”. It was their honesty, their compassion, their sense of humor, camaraderie, and their inner spirituality that spoke to my heart. Through them I was seeing a wonderful Church rich with tradition. The next step was an easy one for my husband and myself. We went through RCIA and became Catholics in April of 2001. It was through the priest’s and nun’s silent witness that we felt the call.

We are all here tonight to thank them. By their saying “Yes” to God’s call and devoting their whole lives to the Church and the parishioners, we are able to celebrate the Sacraments, receive counsel and reconciliation, teach the Catholic faith to our children and to live as Catholic Christians. They are our role models. This special day is set aside for them - our wonderful, dedicated diocesan priests and our thank you just doesn’t seem sufficient.



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PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

Bessie Flanders
October 30, 2004

But, today we want you to know just how special you are to us. How much you are loved by us. How much we appreciate everything you do. You may not hear it as much as you need to, but our gratitude and love is there. Our prayers are behind everything you do. When you are overworked, overwhelmed, dealing with difficult people, and discouraged, please know that for every difficult situation or parishioner, there are so many more that understand and pray for you. We also pray for more young men to come forward to answer their calling to the priesthood to lighten your load. We pray for the seminarians that are becoming our future diocesan priests. We must support and be a source of encouragement to our priests. Prayer is our strongest weapon against attacks on our priests and church.

I just want you to know that I speak for all of us here and throughout the diocese when I say "Thank You." As is my custom, when I have a hard time putting all my thoughts together in a talk, I write poetry. I have composed a poem of thanks for all that our priests do - the things that are seen by us and also all their good works seen only by God.

Thank you and may God bless you richly in your ministry.





Reflection of the Pastors of the Malone Catholic Parishes

by
David Dufrane

Malone Catholic Parishes has had many fine pastors in its long history. Not only is the church beautiful but its priests have long been professional and sincere caretakers of their parishioners. Although I have recently returned to the Church on a regular basis, I am thankful for Msgr. Duprey's passionate approach to his work. He exemplifies what I have always noted about Notre Dame's priests-- care, concern, patience, and professionalism

My story involves the former pastor, now pastor of the parishes in Clayton, NY. Father Arthur LaBaff was the pastor when, during my 3rd grade year, I became an altar server under the guidance of Father Bill Edwards. Father LaBaff stood out for a variety of reasons. He was the best singer of the priests, was very patient with the servers who were often intimidated by the majesty of the church building, and despite of how kind he was, intimidated by his presence, also. I made my share of mistakes. I recall tripping over my server garb once and fell flat on my face as I was bringing the book to Father when he said "let us pray." Much to my amazement, he never said a word to me. Much to my delight, no one in the audience gasped or laughed; although, I am sure they and Father were mortified for me. Father gave strong homilies with humor and intellect that reflected his abiding commitment to the values of our faith. I lived across the street from the Notre Dame Cemetery, where friends and I rode our bikes. Father frequently came through the cemetery and no matter what, would stop if he saw me and ask me how I was and whether I was enjoying the day. Perhaps the most humorous story was when I walked into the rectory office. Father Bill (Edwards) and Father LaBaff were in the office in a slight "wrestling match." There were several others watching who were rather amused by it, but as a quiet, frightened pre-teen, I looked at Father Roland Menard, then-parochial vicar, and said, "I'm going to tell the Bishop." That was enough to cause all there to erupt in laughter! What was striking was that I saw two priests having fun like most people.



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Reflection of the Pastors of the Malone Catholic Parishes

by
David Dufrane

Father Bill was inspiring, also. He knew how to relate to kids and make serving a fun, solemn experience. He took us on trips and made us feel a part of the Church family. Father Murray came sometime after that and was equally supportive of the servers. As I reflect on the number of priests for whom I served at Mass: Msgr. Coseo, Father LaMore, Father Robinson, Father Murray, Father Bill, Father LaBaff, and Father Menard, I recall a question I was asked several years ago when many of sex abuse scandals were becoming daily news fodder-- "were any of the priests you knew ever inappropriate"? My response was direct-- "No." I proceeded to explain that in my experience, the priests at Notre Dame Church were committed, dedicated, and professional priests who took their work seriously and treated the servers with respect and dignity. They never made us feel badly about our mistakes, and we made a ton! The priests made the faith come alive during their Masses.

I am pleased that the Holy Father dedicated the year to the priests! They deserve recognition, for in their vocation, kind words and thanks come all too infrequently, and the good feelings they have inspired in us are often unknown to them. Notre Dame and the whole Diocese are fortunate to have had such exemplary priests!





Remembering Stephen G. Leehy

by
Sally E. Rusaw

In the later 1970's I had the privilege of working Father Leehy in his campus ministry activities with the students at Mater Dei College. Father was outstanding in involving students in the celebration of liturgy. Under his guidance, the preparation and planning for the celebration of Mass would involve at least a dozen students. For example, if a student prepared the theme, it was his/her responsibility to find a different student to read that theme, and the same with any parts which could be so prepared. This enabled those involved in the liturgy committee to invite non-involved students to the Mass. He arranged for Eucharistic ministers among the students when this privilege was new.

Big celebrations called for special activities and at the end of one busy Lent there was a project called "Remember the Covenant". Those of us participating signed a large decorative "Covenant". The large stones around the cross diminished in size as the hardness of our hearts diminished.

And Stations of the Cross? We had several wonderful off-campus retreats, for which Father would assign responsibilities to those "least likely to succeed" in my opinion, and they would fill their responsibilities perfectly. Father had an outstanding ability to involve the students in the Church. And I was enriched in my love for the liturgy.





What Do You Want Me To Do For You?

by

Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ

Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies

Priesthood Sunday reminds me that our priests ask the same question of God the Father as did Jesus, "What do you want me to do for you?" Little did the priests serving in the parishes in Watertown, NY in the late 1950's know that they were going to be asked to be moderators of the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization). As moderators, they were everywhere. Yes, they spent many long hours into the evenings at our events making sure we had a place for fun and safety. This is only one memory of our priests reaching out in care to the teenagers of the day. My mind fills with gratitude for this memory and many memories as I hope you can share fond memories of kind priests.

To pray for missionaries in developing countries has always been part of my prayer life. The meaning of a missionary being sent from our country to serve in a third world country became real for me when I attended the "Missioning Ceremony" for Fr. George Maroun at Holy Family Church in Watertown in 1982. Little did Fr. Maroun realize that his priesthood would lead him to serving in St. Martin de Porras Parish in Mollendo, Peru. I remember his ceremony as a true celebration of being part of the universal church connecting continents. It was a full church of supporters with his brother priests, family, parishioners whom he had served in Watertown and across the diocese gathered to see him willingly accept his mission crucifix symbolic of his call to the missions.

Molly McKee Ryan has been my co-worker in the mission office for a brief time. She has shared many fond memories of priests in her life. Our gratitude to all priests especially those in the Diocese of Ogdensburg and beyond who respond so willingly to the responses that come to them when they daily ask the question, "What do you want me to do for you?"





Whom Shall I Send?

by
Sally E. Rusaw

In my seventy-plus years as a “cradle catholic”, I have had the opportunity to be influenced in my journey by dozens of priests.

It has been my good fortune to know Father Lawrence Cotter since my childhood, when he served his first assignment in Potsdam. Many years later he was chaplain and professor at Mater Dei College. About thirty years ago he gave me advice, a number of times: “Thank Jesus for that”. Whatever the issue, happy or worrisome his response was “Thank Jesus for That”. I thought it a rather strange response, but it stayed with me, and I followed it. Now I have met St. Ignatius of Loyola who taught “Gratitude lies at the very heart of our relationship with God”. Ignatius believed that the greatest source of evil in the world is the lack of gratitude. How simply that simple man had taught me.

In the early 1980s when AIDS reared its ugly head and fear and ignorance made those with the disease the twentieth century untouchables, the young prison chaplain Fr. Duprey, of his own accord, spent the night at the bedside of an infected dying inmate, and when his family could not afford to claim the body, facilitated his burial.

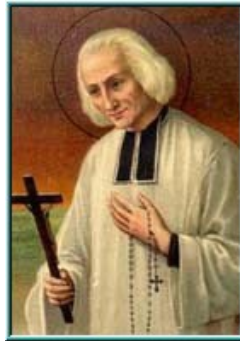
One choice from many memories of Fr. Duprey. One day he learned that I was determined to go to a support group meeting in Ottawa, against the firm advice of my automobile mechanic. Father suggested we exchange cars for a couple days. I didn’t want to for fear I would have an accident and ruin his car. His perspective: A car is fabric and metal; I can replace it. But you are body and soul. How he has always cared for people!

In 1999, Bishop Loverde authorized the closure of Mater Dei College and then moved on to his new assignment. We had no shepherd! Unemployment loomed. Courses of study for students were affected. We struggled on. Then our merciful God sent us the diocesan administer, Msgr. Robert L. Lawyer. I will never forget his kindness and compassion at the baccalaureate Mass and at the graduation ceremony as he helped us recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in God’s long range planning.

Whom shall I send? To counsel my people? To bring my loving presence to the sick and dying? To bury the dead? To comfort the grieving and the sad and the worried? To help them recognize and celebrate the joys I provide? To help them bask in my love. To help them be grateful? To lead by example?

Thank you, God, for all the men who have replied. “Here I am! Send me!”





*St. Jean Marie Vianney
Patron of Parish Priests*

*Prayer for Priests
and
Priestly Vocations*

Heavenly Father, please grant to Your faithful servants, the grace and strength to carry out Your mission for the Church each day. Keep our priests close to You and continue to inspire them to serve others in Your holy name. Please help to inspire men who are called to a priestly vocation to answer Your call and participate in the fullness that You have planned for them. Amen.

